

me to do. That's just the only appropriate thing, and I will rigorously adhere to that.

*Q.* Have both sides asked you to, sir? Have both sides asked you to keep at it?

*The President.* No, I didn't say that. It depends upon—I think that it is—first of all, in this context, I believe that is exceedingly unlikely. That is, I honestly believe, given the pendency of the Israeli election and the developments within the Palestinian community and the larger Arab world, that the best chance they have to make an agreement is in the next 3 weeks.

Now, none of us who long for peace in the Middle East would ever give up on it. But I think that is both a theoretical question and an unlikely one, because if you look at where the forces are today, they have a better chance to do it now, if they're ever going to do it. It's just—it's really hard. If it weren't hard, they would have done it before this. I mean, they signed the Oslo agreement in '93 and put all this stuff off to the end because they knew it was hard, and it's still hard.

But if you look at where we've been the last few months, it's not going to get any easier. And I just hope that—I've said this before, I said it earlier—we had a confluence of Christmas, Hanukkah, and the end of Ramadan and the beginning of the Eid, and maybe there's

something in the stars that will give them the divine strength and inspiration to do it. I don't think it's going to get easier.

*Q.* Well, are your terms negotiable, or are they just parameters?

*The President.* No, they're the parameters. The negotiations, in other words, have to occur within them.

*Q.* So East Jerusalem could be negotiated more?

*The President.* No. I do not want to talk more about this. They understand exactly what I mean. Both sides know exactly what I mean, and they know exactly what they still have to do, and that's enough right now.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:37 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; President Kim Dae-jung of South Korea; President-elect George W. Bush; and Gen. Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.), and Condoleezza Rice, incoming Bush administration nominees for Secretary of State and National Security Adviser, respectively. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Statement on Census 2000

*December 28, 2000*

Today I am pleased to receive from the Department of Commerce the first data released from Census 2000, our country's 22d decennial census. I congratulate Secretary Norman Mineta, Secretary William Daley, and Census Bureau Director Kenneth Prewitt for their leadership in Census 2000, the longest continuous scientific effort in American democracy. Since

1790, these data collected during each decennial census help to tell the ongoing story of America, its rich heritage and broad diversity. Most importantly, I want to thank the American people for their participation in Census 2000. With their help, the country is better equipped to meet the needs of every American and the challenges in the 21st century.